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PRESS RELEASE

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High School Automotive Teams to Compete for Top Honors in 2004 Ford Motor Company/American Automobile Association (AAA) Student Auto Skills Challenge

Although they will look brand-new, the ten Ford Crown Victorias that will be lined up on the top deck of Little Rock's Park Plaza tomorrow morning (Saturday, May 1) will not operate. That is because they have been "bugged" for ten Arkansas high school automotive teams that will race to repair them for top honors in the annual Ford Motor Company/AAA Student Auto Skills Challenge. Preliminary activities for the contest, such as layout and inspection of tools, will begin at 9:30 a.m. The actual competition will begin at 10:00 a.m. and is expected to conclude by 11:30 a.m. An awards presentation will be held at 12:00 p.m.

The qualifying student teams and their instructors are from the Southern Arkansas Tech Career Center, Camden; South Arkansas Career Center, El Dorado; National Park Technology Center, Hot Springs; Huntsville High School; Jacksonville High School; Jonesboro Area Technical Center; Ouachita Career Center, Malvern; River Valley Technical Center, Morrilton; Springdale High School; and Waldron High School. They were chosen based on the results of a written test administered by the

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Department of Workforce Education. Staff from the Department of Workforce Education's Career and Technical Education Section will be joined by Mike Right of St. Louis, Missouri, AAA Vice President of Public Affairs, in overseeing the event.

The objective of the Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills Challenge is to encourage students to pursue careers as automotive service technicians. The complex mechanics of automobiles and the increasing need for safe and pollution-free motor vehicles require sophisticated technical skills and a high degree of knowledge, as well as accuracy in workmanship. In this weekend's "hands-on" competition, successful repair of the artificial malfunctions used to "bug" the cars will provide an accurate test of automotive knowledge and diagnostic skills. The winner will be the team that makes the repairs using the highest quality workmanship in the shortest amount of time.

The Student Auto Skills Contests are held in each state, and the winning teams will compete at the National Student Auto Skills Challenge this summer in Washington, D.C. The winning school will receive a new Ford vehicle to be used for training purposes.

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